

SACRED JOURNEY

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Spring 2012
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THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Fellowship In Prayer

encourages and supports
a spiritual orientation to life,

promotes the practice
of prayer, meditation,
and service to others,

and helps bring about
a deeper spirit of unity
among humankind.



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Fellowship In Prayer, Inc.

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3227

PHONE: 609-924-6863
FAX: 609-924-6910
WEBSITE: www.fellowshipinprayer.org
EMAIL: editorial@sacredjourney.org

Executive Director

JANET M. HAAG

Editorial Projects Manager

LISA M. CLAYTON

Circulation Manager

LINDA D. BAUMANN

Cover Layout

SHARYN MURRAY

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Fellowship In Prayer, Inc.
291 Witherspoon Street
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Cover: Anemones bloom in the mountainous forests of Bohemia where Hana Gruna grew up. © istockphoto.com/balticboy

Capacity for Goodness

DAVID NEWTON



In writing this message, I resort, once again, to the wisdom of those greater than I to help articulate my thoughts on the subject.

My source is the noted Oxford historian Alan Bullock, (later Lord Bullock) who completed his seminal work *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, with this observation:

The years I have been recalling showed the depths of evil of which human beings are capable in their treatment of each other. But the historical record shows that even in the worst of circumstances, not only in battle, but in overcrowded prisons and camps under torture, in the resistance and in face of certain death, there were a handful—drawn from every nation—who showed to what heights men and women can rise.

In Jerusalem the Jewish people have created a memorial museum, *Yad Vashem*, to remind themselves and the rest of the world of the horrors of the Holocaust. It is impossible to go round it and see the evidence they have collected without emerging overwhelmed and crushed. As you come out, however, you enter an avenue of trees known as the Avenue of the Righteous, every tree in which commemorates someone not Jewish who did not stand aside but risked his or her life to help the Jews in their distress.

I have never forgotten the juxtaposition of the Holocaust Museum and the trees. They remain for me the double image of those years, the unbelievable cruelty and the courage, the callousness and the

compassion—the human capacity for evil, but also the reassurance of the possibility of human goodness.

It is with a certain sadness that our organization, Fellowship In Prayer, which publishes *SACRED JOURNEY*, says goodbye to its Executive Director, Janet Haag. Janet has been with the organization for the last six years, in that time her kindness, devotion and enthusiasm has touched so many both in the Princeton area and beyond. Her dedication to interfaith work and her professionalism will be greatly missed. In Janet I found an abundance of that human capacity for goodness as referred to by Lord Bullock in the excerpt printed above. I wish her every good fortune in her future endeavors.

Please enjoy this issue of *SACRED JOURNEY*.

Sincerely,

David Hartman

David Newton

Journeys

JANET M. HAAG



The great Joseph Campbell is one of my all-time favorite writers and from whom I can always find wisdom for my life. In particular I have been guided by the following:

If you follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. Follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be.

When I reflect on my own sacred journey, I am continually amazed at where "following my bliss" has taken me. Six years ago it led me to Fellowship In Prayer and to sharing an enriching time of growth with everyone associated with this wonderful organization, especially you, our readers. Recently, a door unexpectedly opened and I made the decision to walk through it, to go down yet another path and become the executive director of Interweave, an interfaith community learning center in Summit, New Jersey focused on teaching skills for wholistic living to strengthen wellness, deepen spirituality and promote the common good (interweave.org). There is a real synergy between the respective missions of the two organizations and I hope we will find ways to partner as we move forward.

Right now, I would like to thank you for all your support over the years, for welcoming me into your life through SACRED JOURNEY and other FIP sponsored endeavors and for your notes and calls affirming our work, and sharing gifts of grace you have

discovered as you make your way in and about the world.

I wish for you always openness to following your bliss, the courage of your convictions and companions along the way who will bring you joy!

This particular issue of the journal focuses on journeys of another sort—provoked by those who seek to confine life, to use force to discriminate and oppress—as well as those who refuse to be defined only as their victims, whose faith and hope and love enable them to rise above the worst of human atrocities, not only to survive—but to thrive! These are the people and stories that inspire us, reminding us who and what really matters, calling us to renew our commitment to integrating every aspect of our journeys into our lives.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters have a wonderful phrase they use to mark happy occasions and to acknowledge the end of a very bad experience or trying time. These words are certainly appropriate as you wind your way through this issue of the journal, sharing the profound pain and emergent joy of our writers. Hold onto them as you journey onward, meeting your own set of unique challenges and blessings. *Mazel Tov! To Life!*

An Interview with Hana Gruna



Yam Hasoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in the United States begins the evening of April 18th and concludes at sundown on April 19th. It is a sobering reminder not only of the injustice that was perpetrated against our Jewish brothers and sisters more than sixty years ago but also, of the brutality and genocide that continues in our world today.

Following is a two-part interview, first with Holocaust survivor, Hana Gruna, conducted by FIP's good friend, Rabbi Adam Feldman. By sharing her story, Hana puts a human face on the suffering so many people endured during the Holocaust and she offers us a glimpse into the powerful truth that we can live with any how if we have a reason why. Then a commentary by the Rabbi himself on a very special Torah Reunion being held by The Jewish Center in Princeton.

Rabbi Feldman: Let's start with you telling us what you remember about your youth?

Hana: I grew up in the small town of Sušice (a town in the Pilsen Region of the Czech Republic.) where everybody knew everybody. We could walk wherever we wanted because we had friends all around. I lived in a large old house that had a beautiful garden on the banks of the river. We had lots of company. Our friends and relatives enjoyed being in our garden. The month of June was always beautiful in this mountainous part of Bohemia—the trees then were in full bloom, the bees were busy, birds were singing and after dark the fireflies would chase each other in the grass and around the flowers.

So, you felt safe in your town?

Completely safe, yes. Going swimming somewhere where I shouldn't have gone was about as dangerous as it got.

What were some of the activities you used to do with your friends?

We used to go for walks in the forest. We would go dancing. We were always dancing somewhere. We would go skiing when it snowed. We had no worries and we were completely unprepared for what was to come.

Tell us a bit about your family.

Before the terrible days began my parents, my brother and I had a comfortable life on our farm in our small town. The first dark cloud to appear on our horizon was the illness and death of our father in 1935. It happened suddenly. He had cancer and there was nothing they could do to save him. This was a shattering blow to my mother and it was difficult for her to go on without the husband she loved so much, the man who had sheltered her from all worries that did not directly concern her home and her children. After his death, it was my mothers' siblings with whom she had always been close and her many friends who helped her pull herself together and go on living for the sake of her two young children but our lives were changed.

You mentioned your mother's garden. Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

The garden was beautiful. It was filled with fruit trees and roses and there were steps that went straight down to the river. It couldn't have been nicer. A lot of children would play there and my parents had guests visit them in the evenings. And there was a little bit of this garden on the property of the house next door.

The woman, Rosa, who lived there was horrible. People were afraid of her. She would yell out the window at people walking by, "Listen I know something, you will be sorry . . . I am telling you." She always wanted a piece of our garden so she could get to the river and after my father died, she wanted my mother to sell this piece to her. My mother refused and so she got very angry.

What did your neighbor do?

Rosa was anti-Semitic and when the Germans took control of Czech lands, she caused harm to many people with the things she said about them, especially my mother. But before I tell you about that I need to tell you something else. Soon after my father died, the Germans took my brother from his school. He was a sixteen-year-old and they sent him to a farm somewhere to work. Then suddenly we received news that he had been killed. We were told he had run away from the farm with some other boys. They got to Switzerland but there, they were handed over to the Gestapo, put in various prisons and then killed. My mother was heartbroken, first her husband and then, her son. She didn't know what to do and she was crying all the time. I went to talk to our doctor and even though it was a time when Christians were not supposed to help Jewish people, he prescribed something for my mother because he was a friend of my parents. She was still grief-stricken though and didn't want to talk to anyone or do anything. In the evening, I would try to get her to go into the garden but she would just sit there lifeless.

Now this is what happened. Reinhard Heydrich, who was Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, was killed. Some people came from London to kill him. He was horrible, you know, but he was one of Hitler's faithful lieutenants and after he was shot, the Germans declared Marshall Law. The village of Lidese, a town nearby, was burned to the ground. Men were shot, the women were sent to concentration camps and the

children were packed off to Germany. At ten o'clock on Saturday morning, June 13, 1942, the police came for my mother. When I asked them what they wanted from her they replied they did not know anything except that they received orders from the Gestapo to bring her to headquarters. I said I wanted to go with her, but they told me that there was no more room in the car. When four hours had passed and my mother had not returned I went to the town hall to find out what had happened to her. The place was crowded but no one could give me any definitive information except that a number of people had been arrested and taken to Gestapo headquarters in the city of Klatovi, the district seat.

I managed to call a longtime friend of my parents, Mr. Adler, and he said he would try to find out what had happened to my mother. I asked him if he could arrange for me to talk to my mother and he did. I got permission to travel to the station where my mother was being held. The Gestapo would only let me in to see my mother. She looked horrible. When we started to talk the officer said I had to speak to her in German not Czech. So we talked about the cows and the hay and we both started to cry. Then, the phone rang and when the officer went to answer it my mother looked at me and said, "It was Rosa. She told them I said it was wonderful Heydrich had been killed and that more will happen."

So Rosa made up a story? She lied about your mother and that's why your mother was taken away?

Yes and my mother also told me that day that she didn't think she would ever get out of that place alive. The following Monday I heard a report on the radio about the people who had been killed in the woods nearby by the Gestapo, and my mother was listed among the dead. The next day the Gestapo came to our house with her shoes and sweater and they told me I would have to get out because our house and everything in it had been

confiscated by the state.

I was to go and work where the Gestapo could keep an eye on me. They were going to take me and all the Jews from the small towns nearby to the ghetto in Klatovi. We received papers telling us to be prepared to take only what we could carry with us from our homes, no more than 50 lbs. No one knew what to take. The whole town was upset. I guess I wasn't thinking about it much because when I got onto the train to Klatovi, I realized I had taken almost nothing with me. Just then, I felt a little something in my pocket and realized I still had a key. Before we left they had taken the keys away from us, but somehow I still had one.

Where did you stay when you were in Klatovi?

When I went to Klatovi, there was a group of people standing near the conductor at the station and I heard someone scream, "There she is!" It was a woman, Mrs. Picare, whose son had married my cousin. His family was there and everybody was talking at once and saying they wanted me to stay with them. It made me laugh because even though there was nothing funny about it, I knew their homes were already so full. The woman kept screaming, "Hana is my relative! We already told the children that she is staying with us and she will have her own room—the one that belonged to our cook. It is the only place in this whole town where she won't be alone." So that was the end of it.

What did you do with the key that you found in your pocket?

I wasn't prepared for winter and didn't have anything to wear. I had only a few summer clothes with me. So one night, I snuck out of the ghetto and went back to my house. I used the key to get in and take some warm clothes.

How long did you stay in Klatovi?

We were in Klatovi until we were transferred to the concentration camp. I don't know how big the ghetto was, but it was very crowded and everyone was forced to work in the factory—lawyers, doctors, professors—everybody. And do you want to hear something funny? In the factory nobody worked because nobody knew what to do. It was nonsense. We spent our time gluing things and just talking and saying "What do you think? Where we will go? And so on."

Because Jews were not allowed to attend the university there were students working in the factory. I knew some of them because we had been skiing together and had gone dancing some Sunday nights. Every day a few of them would walk back to Mrs. Picare's home with me from the factory. Mrs. Picare would say, "It is a blessing that we have Hana here because she brings the young people, and it makes us happy."

What do you remember about the transport that took you from Klatovi to the concentration camp?

Don't you want to hear how I got married first?

Yes, of course, tell us.

One day Dr. Feldman, a medical doctor who was a friend of my parents and who was working at the factory said, "Hana, we are talking about you. You are the only one who isn't married and will go on without anyone. It is really very risky for you to be single and we can't think of anything else to do. You have to marry, change your name, and be with somebody." Dr. Feldman told me that a young man named Charles wanted to marry me. "You are crazy," I said.

How old were you?

Nineteen and I considered the whole marriage idea to be

nonsense. Charles spoke to me and said, "But I thought you liked me?" and I responded, "I do like you, but that doesn't mean I want to get married." Still, he insisted, and he told me that I could not go around alone. He told me that when we both came away from this, if I didn't like him, I could send him away to who knows where.

I agreed to marry him, but the whole thing was complicated because I needed to get papers saying I was married. At least one or two Germans were working in every government office. So Dr. Feldman, who was my angel said, "Hana, we will go before 6:00 in the morning when the Germans are not yet in the office." And that's what we did.

When we got back to the factory, people congratulated us. Charles said, "You want to know how smart she is? She waited until she signed the papers and then told me she could not cook." Everybody laughed. This was only a few days before we were taken to Teresienstadt.

Tell us about Teresienstadt.

It was built to house 7,000 people, but there were 70,000 Jews there. In a normal sized room, there would be 20 people sleeping in bunk beds, stacked three high. I slept on the top bunk with a woman I knew. We had to crawl up there and lie down, our noses practically touching the ceiling. I will never forget that there was a family with a beautiful six-old-year daughter who had diabetes. She was sick and needed pills but they couldn't get any. Every day when we came from work, the girl was more pale, and the parents were there just looking at her, helpless to do anything to make it better.

What did you do there?

We worked. In a way, it was like being anywhere else—if you knew someone, you got a better job. A friend of mine was already there and she placed people where they were going

to work in the camp. She told me that she had a better job for me than cleaning the toilets or the stairs—those were the jobs people had to do in the beginning; during the first hundred hours they were in the camp. Because this girl was my friend she had a wonderful job for me. There was a group of Gestapo police responsible for overseeing what was going on in the camp. They were mostly all young guys, but there was one man who was the general. He was shorter than me and pretty old. He had been in the First World War and done something special, and so when he came to Teresienstadt, they gave him a room for himself. My friend gave me the job of cleaning his room, bringing him water from downstairs and waiting for him in the lunch line.

I worked for this man for some time. One day I was there when he came in, and he was furious. He took off his boots and they were very messy and he threw them at me and said, "Clean them!" And I said, "With what? I don't see a rock or piece of paper. Do you want me to clean them with my tongue?" I always had a big mouth, you know. He said, "Out! Out! I have had enough of you." So I was out.

What were meals like in Teresienstadt?

Food? Oh boy! The hunger started in the morning. We got horrible, bitter, black coffee and a piece of bread. I don't know what it was, but it was very bad. Everybody finished it right away because it was the only food we got. Even if you wanted to save it for later, it wasn't possible. At noon we stood in line to get soup, and I don't know what was in it. In the evening we got soup again.

When I was working in the fields at a farm, we got something to eat because we were around potatoes and tomatoes everyday and we would steal. It was forbidden to bring anything into the ghetto to our people, but we were hungry so we made it work somehow. And in the evening we would get together and everybody brought their food and we would divide it.

You were in Teresienstadt until September '44. Where did you go after that?

Auschwitz. One day in Teresienstadt we heard shooting. We knew the front must be somewhere near. A few times, we saw airplanes—American airplanes—so we knew that something was going on.

We were told there was going to be three transports taking people to build new barracks, but they didn't say where, and they told us they would be taking 5,000 men from ages 18 to 45. My husband was in the first transport, and then for the second transport they said 500 women who wanted to go to be with their men could go.

So you volunteered to be one of those women?

I did—with my other friends. A guy who was on the farm where I worked knew my father and he said, "Hanna, nobody goes on the transports unless they are forced. Don't go, don't go!" But we went and it turned out to be Auschwitz.

How long were you in Auschwitz?

Until the end of the war.

Was life in Auschwitz much worse than in Teresienstadt?

Yes, oh my goodness! It was scary, scary, scary! It was the most horrible thing. There was shooting all over. The smoke came up from the chimney day after day. There was the smell of burning flesh. The Nazis didn't want people to survive. They wanted to kill as many of us as possible. None of us ever saw our husbands there.

After the war I went to the Red Cross and asked if they could tell me what happened to my husband, my uncles, but often the last thing they knew about people was that they were on a train from Teresienstadt. They were all killed right away.

One day they asked, "Who can do something with machinery? We need 200 people." And I said to my friend Greta, "We should go!" But she reminded me that we volunteered once (to go to Auschwitz), and she said we were not going to again. "Listen, here," I told her, "maybe next week, maybe next month, we will be put out in flames like everybody else. At least we should try this." So, I pulled her toward the place where they were writing the names of the volunteers. She tried holding me back but I was stronger. In the end, this decision was how we got out of Auschwitz alive.

Once, after the war, when I was visiting Greta and her second husband, she was preparing something in the kitchen and her husband said to me how Greta never talks about what happened in Auschwitz or how she survived there. She doesn't want to say one word about it. Then he asked, "What happened? How did you survive?" So I told him the story of how I was pulling and she was pushing. At that minute Greta came in the room and said, "Don't forget to tell him how I almost lost my arm! It was nearly pulled away from my shoulder because of what you did to me!" Then he looked at Greta and said, "I would have married you even without your arm. Hana, thank you!"

Tell us about the end of the war. When it ended, where did you go?

One morning someone got up very early and went outside and returned with the news that no one was at the gate and it was open. We didn't know what we should do, then somebody said that they are playing us. He was afraid we would walk out of the gate and they will start shooting us from the woods. Then someone else said that we had to try! So again, it came down to the few of us who were strong enough to lead the way. I was, and Greta too. We walked slowly out of the gate. Within a minute we heard the Czech anthem and saw some people coming to get us. We had no idea we were so near to the Czech border!

And where did you go?

They took us to town to help us clean ourselves up and get rid of our lice. They fed us and gave us clothes to wear. They wanted us to safely stay there a bit, but we were all eager to get home. We headed to Prague by train. We were probably a hundred people. We had no money, we had nothing, and no one asked us for a ticket—not on the train or on the bus. When Greta reached her stop, she got out off the bus and started crying because we would now be apart, since I was going on to Sušice.

What happened when you returned to Sušice?

The bus was empty so the driver took me all the way to my home and when I got out I saw our old gardner who knew me all my life, working in our garden. He looked right at me and said, "What do you want?" I said his name and he looked right at me but couldn't recognize me. I was skin and bones and had no hair. I said, "My goodness, don't you know me? Then he responded, "Oh my goodness! Hana, Hana, Hana!"

This man told me that people had made my house into four little apartments, and that everyone was taken. A German couple lived in one of the apartments and he told me they would probably be going back to Germany soon because civilians were allowed to leave. I had no place to stay.

I wondered if I should go to a hotel and ask for a room, but instead I went to city hall. The people in the offices there were drinking because it was the end of the war. I knew many of these people, and they invited me to go home with them, but I said that I would love to go to my home. They asked me why I didn't go to my home and I told them other people were living there. They said, "We will help you!"

There must have been seven policemen who came to my house with me that afternoon. They knocked on the door and when someone answered, they said, "Open the door!" The

people inside said, "We won't open the door but we can tell you that we will be out in a few days." And one of the policemen said, "We would like you to be out in few minutes." The person inside said, "But I have to call someone who can take our furniture and move the rest of our stuff." And the policeman with me responded, "We will help you with it in two hours."

I soon had a place to stay in my own house.

Back home you eventually saw your neighbor Rosa again. What happened?

It took some time, you know. She was in the prison in Sušice before I got back there because she had caused harm to many people from our town, even our mayor. At one point someone came to me and said, "Come to the prison with us. There is a small window where Rosa's cell is and we are going to throw eggs at her." I responded, "I don't want to throw eggs; I want her punished once and for all for what she did."

I went to a lawyer my parents knew and I told him I wanted to file a complaint with the court. He wasn't sure he could do it but I told him to write it as though it was me and I would sign it and file it myself. He agreed and it wasn't long before I received a letter to come to court because I was the plaintiff.

The medical doctor, Dr. Feldman, who was my friend, went with me. He had come back from Auschwitz, but without his family. We went to the court together and when Rosa came into the room, she called me by the pet name my parents used to call me and she got on her knees. After the judge read the complaint and his sentence, Rosa said, "Hanicka, you won't do this to me, will you? I didn't know they would punish your mother so much. I just wanted a piece of your garden."

Because of what she did to your mother, Rosa was tried and convicted?

Yes.

What happened to her?

She was hanged. The judge asked us if we wanted to watch the hanging. Dr. Feldman said, "We have seen enough in Auschwitz, we don't have to see this." But I felt I needed to be there. When we were in the camps and we had nothing to read and we would talk about our lives and what was going to happen to us, I always said I wanted to live because I wanted my neighbor brought to justice for causing my mother's death. It was a reason I wanted to survive.

Tell us about your family and how you came to the United States.

I re-married after the war and I have two daughters, four grandsons and eight great-grandchildren; the youngest is just a year old and her name is Hana. We came to the United States when the Russians occupied our country and started to say our children would not be allowed to go to the university. It sounded like what had happened to me with the Germans was starting all over again with the Russians.

* * * * *

Today, Hana lives in New Jersey. She beams as she talks about her children and grandchildren. She was eager to share photographs and tell of the joy they bring her; especially her great grandson's description of her age as one hundred minus eight. It is clear that in them, she embraces life—its goodness and light—leaving behind the evil and darkness of another time. Thank you, Hana!

The Sušice Torah Scrolls: The Story. The Journey. The Reunion.

ADAM FELDMAN

Our congregation at The Jewish Center in Princeton is the beneficiary of having a Holocaust Torah from Sušice. After World War II hundreds of Torahs were collected and housed at the Westminster Synagogue in London. Eventually, they were sent to various Jewish communities around the world. We received our Torah in 1987 and marked its arrival with a special dedication ceremony. Since then, it has been on display in a showcase at our synagogue where we can visit it often to try and understand its story.

Coincidentally, another one of the sacred scrolls from the small town of Sušice ended up in our general neighborhood at the Holocaust Education Center at Mercer College. Saul Goldwater, who is the director and a member of our congregation, asked me if I would bring our Torah and say a few words at the center's opening. I put our Torah in the back seat of my car, in a seat belt of course, and took it over to Mercer County College. I carried it inside and placed our Torah next to theirs. "We consider the Torah to be a living document," I said, "These Torahs are back together again. Imagine if they could share their stories; where they were sixty-five plus years ago, what happened to them during those days, where they've been since, and what it means now for them to be here, together again."

Remembering is an important value for Jews. We have received commandments about this, "Remember the Sabbath Day. Remember the stories of your ancestors." We are obligated as parents, teachers and rabbis to pass the stories on from one



Some of the 1,564 Czech scrolls housed in the Westminster Synagogue.

generation to the next. There are many biblical references to memory and different days in our calendar specifically dedicated to remembering.

When my wife and I visited Prague and Teresienstadt last summer, I found the memorials very striking especially one that included hundreds of pictures the children of Teresienstadt had drawn during those dark days—bright, hopeful pictures from children whose lives were later brutally taken from them. As a Rabbi who was born nineteen years after World War II, I know Jewish history but I struggle with how my generation will continue to honor Holocaust survivors and tell their stories after they are gone. Right now there are still people in our congregations, in our communities, who experienced the worst of the atrocities of World War II. There was a member of my congregation who used to sit right in front of me every Shabbat—he passed away last year—and it is as though I hear him saying to me, “Rabbi, you take it from here.” We need to tell their stories not only so people can understand and experience what happened during the Holocaust, but so we can learn why hatred and discrimination are so wrong. It isn’t such a long step from the events that happened in World War II to the events that are happening today. Bullying might seem like a little something going on in a schoolyard but it can quickly get out of hand. One anti-Semitic, racist or sexist comment can seem inconsequential but it can lead to bigger problems. We have to learn from the experience of the Holocaust. We have to learn to appreciate that we’re different from each other, that we benefit from our differences, and that we need to treat each other with mutual respect and care.

After the event I mentioned earlier at Mercer College, Saul did some research and discovered there were four other Torahs from Sušice in the United States: Santa Monica, California; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; and Venice, Florida. Neil Simon, our program director at the synagogue, had the idea to host a reunion of the six Torahs at a *Yom HaShoah*

(Holocaust Remembrance) event. On April 22, 2012, The Jewish Center's Holocaust Torah will be reunited with the five other sacred scrolls that were part of the religious life of Sušice, in a ceremony that will honor the victims of the *Shoah* and celebrate the survival of the Jewish people. According to the Westminster Synagogue in London, this kind of Torah reunion has never happened before. The Torahs will be traveling here, each with their own seat on the plane (courtesy of Continental and United Airlines) next to an escort from their synagogue. We will read from the Torahs and sing and dance with them. We will remember and we will celebrate. There is a text in the Torah that speaks to its being a living document, telling us we are to evolve and grow. We often think of memory as taking the past and bringing it to the present, but we also create memories now for the future. And creating memories is essential to the survival of the Jewish people. **SJ**



Rabbi Adam Feldman joined The Jewish Center, Princeton, NJ in the summer of 2005 after serving as Assistant and Associate Rabbi at Temple Beth Sholom in Roslyn Heights, NY. He worked for many years in synagogue and Jewish communal work, including working as a Program Director and senior staff member in national youth organizations and other prominent synagogues.

We Are the Light: The Women and Girls of Burundi

WESTINA MATTHEWS

“Is there something I need to know about these blouses?” she asked, standing behind me in the check-out line at the outlet store in Orlando, Florida. I was in town for a conference, and during the Saturday afternoon break while a larger group went to the designer brand outlet, I was on a mission . . . literally, and opted for a thriftier shopping excursion instead. “\$5.48 each,” I responded, holding four no-iron white blouses and a blue jean skirt in my arms. “I am heading to Africa in two weeks,” I explained, “and I want to take clothes with me I can wear and then leave behind.” I spent two and a half hours at the mall that day, making an initial sweep of almost fifty stores, and then making a second round to complete my purchases. I bought everything one size larger than I wear to maximize the likelihood the clothes could be used by women in Burundi.

Burundi is a landlocked country in East-Central Africa. It is surrounded by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east, and The Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. In Burundi ordained and lay women leaders are quietly working to confront the socio-cultural, economic and development challenges that country is facing. Burundi is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland, but has a population of over 10 million, 46% under the age of 14 and only 2.5% over the age of 65.

In late March 2011, as part of a group from Trinity Wall Street in New York City, I spent a week in the small village of Matana, Burundi, located two hours south of the capital city of Bujumbura; a place so small it does not appear on any map. Burundi has recently emerged from a civil war that officially ended in 2006. Reconciliation, resettlement, and poverty alleviation are now in the forefront of this country's concerns.

In 1992, Burundi ratified the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. However, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, and malnourishment among women persist.

While visiting Matana, Mathilde Nkwirikiye, the wife of Archbishop Bernard Ntahoturi, graciously offered and indeed insisted, the women in our travel group meet with some of the women leaders in Matana. On our last day in Matana, when we met with these women at Ms. Nkwirikiye's home, it felt like we were old friends coming together. A woman priest in her thirties shared her story of having been abandoned by her husband after the civil war. The reason he gave for leaving was that she was from a different tribe. She found herself raising their three children alone; unable even to tell others her husband had left her because of the stigma about divorce in that culture. As she broke down in tears telling her story we instinctively created a close circle around her to express our support and share in her grief. We were so engaged that we didn't realize the sun was setting and that we were bathed only in what little



natural light was left. When the Archbishop appeared in the doorway, he somewhat impatiently suggested, "Turn on the lights! Why don't you have any lights on?" Our hostess spread her arms wide, symbolically embracing our circle of women and responded, "WE are the light." She went on to explain, "In the international community Burundian girls and women are perceived as invisible victims. Our girls traditionally grow up in a protected space. In fact, in *Kirundi*, the national language (or dialect) of Burundi, one of the words used to designate a 'girl' is *umunyakigo*, meaning 'one who lives in the space hidden from the public.' Women's contributions are rarely fully recognized here but people will soon discover that our women are not invisible victims but rather, invisible actors."

Although it is a country torn by years of civil and ethnic war, I now have great hope for poverty-stricken Burundi. I am convinced that it will be the women and girls who will lead this country into a new era of peace, renewal, love, reconciliation and forgiveness. For indeed they are the light! 



Westina Matthews, PhD, worked on Wall Street for over twenty-four years. A member of Trinity Wall Street, she is now an author, spiritual director, retreat leader, inspirational speaker, and adjunct professor whose practice fosters contemplative living through "holy listening."

First they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

MARTIN NIEMÖLLER

MAY I SEE MY OWN LIMITS WITH COMPASSION,
JUST AS I VIEW THE LIMITS OF OTHERS.

ROSHI JOAN HALIFAX

There may be times when we are
powerless to prevent injustice,
but there must never be a time
when we fail to protest.

ELIE WIESEL

We are preaching hope, standing on the bones of the past.

JOHN RUCYAHANA, BISHOP OF RWANDA

There must be always remaining in every life,
some place for the singing of angels,
some place for that which in itself
is breathless and beautiful.

REV. DR. HOWARD THURMAN

ONCE SOCIAL CHANGE BEGINS, IT CANNOT BE REVERSED.
YOU CANNOT UN-EDUCATE THE PERSON
WHO HAS LEARNED TO READ.
YOU CANNOT HUMILIATE THE PERSON WHO FEELS PRIDE.
YOU CANNOT OPPRESS THE PEOPLE
WHO ARE NOT AFRAID ANY MORE.

CESAR CHAVEZ

Let us pray not to be sheltered from dangers
but to be fearless when facing them.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

DARKNESS DESERVES GRATITUDE. IT IS THE ALLELUIA POINT
AT WHICH WE LEARN TO UNDERSTAND
THAT ALL GROWTH DOES NOT TAKE PLACE IN THE SUNLIGHT.

SR. JOAN CHITTISTER

When I marched with Martin Luther King in Selma,
I felt my legs were praying.

RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL

I BELIEVE IN THE SUN
EVEN WHEN IT IS NOT SHINING
AND I BELIEVE IN LOVE,
EVEN WHEN THERE'S NO ONE THERE.
AND I BELIEVE IN GOD,
EVEN WHEN HE IS SILENT.

INSCRIBED ON THE WALL AT THE COLOGNE CONCENTRATION CAMP

Serenity in the Midst of Savagery

SATPAL SINGH

I stood up in complete reverence to the Divine Will, and said my own last prayer. I had accepted death, just as death had accepted me.

It was odd, under the circumstances, to be feeling as serene, and as much at peace with the world, as I did. But such is the power of prayer.

This was a bad time for Sikhs in India. Sikh men were being beaten, in most cases with iron rods, and then subjected to the garland treatment, which means putting tires around their necks, dousing them with kerosene and setting them on fire. Before such treatment, many were forced to watch their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters being brutally gang-raped. Even children were not spared. This ruthless ethnic cleansing of Sikhs had been organized following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 by two Sikhs after she had led an assault on a large number of historic *gurdwaras*, Sikh houses of worship. Mobs were being organized and incited by senior government politicians to wipe out the Sikhs. The police stood by watching, and often abetted the carnage. The mobs were given government voting lists so they could identify Sikh homes and burn them and the Sikhs inside. The state-controlled media did its share by broadcasting sloganeering to shed Sikh blood. The incoming Prime Minister justified the carnage by saying, "When a big tree falls, the earth shakes."

During this time of chaos, I was traveling on a train when it made an unscheduled stop at a small railway station. A mob of about twenty or more entered the coach and started attacking Sikhs one by one. Standing outside our coach, the police incited the mob to show no mercy and to spare no Sikh. Inside the

coach, my co-passengers, including some army men in uniform who were sitting next to me minutes earlier, watched me being attacked ruthlessly without intervening. I tried desperately to save my head, the main target of the most vicious blows. Ironically, it was the loss of consciousness that would eventually save my life. After throwing my body on the railway track, the mob moved on to their next victims.

When I regained consciousness, I was badly bruised, but was able to quickly crawl back onto the train to avoid being stoned to death by the mob standing on the platform. The train soon restarted its journey towards its destination, the country's capital Delhi, where the carnage was happening with particularly vicious ferocity. We were now hurtling towards an inevitable finality for me, where I would be beaten and burned alive, or suffer an even worse fate as many Sikhs had. There was no option but to reconcile to my inescapable destiny. Such reconciliation does not come naturally, or easily. My faith gave me the courage and the strength to stand in prayer and be transformed.

I closed my eyes and in my mind I hugged my wife—who was holding her breath hundreds of miles away—asking her forgiveness for breaking the promise of life-long companionship so suddenly. I hugged my four-year-old son and daughter of a few months, asking them to be good to their mother and to every human being in the world. I thanked God for the wonderful life I had been granted and for a loving family that was bringing warmth to my heart from distances afar.

In the midst of all the brutality and savagery, I felt faith in the basic goodness of human nature. I had no resentment, no complaint, no rancor. I was at peace with myself. I was at peace with the world. I was at peace with God. The tranquility of prayer had touched the deafening cacophony of violence and silenced it. Through all of this, I strived to keep in my mind and heart the Sikh Scripture, "No one is an enemy, nor a stranger, I get along with all."

A confluence of highly improbable coincidences and blind but fortuitous gambles took me out of the jaws of death. However, I was soon plunged into another slaughterhouse, this time with an ironic twist—I was now at an army facility, at a railway station in a city that housed a major army base.

The police chief at the station refused to protect me. His answer to my pleadings was unambiguous and emphatic. “*Sardar ji* (Sir!), whatever is written in your destiny, I can’t interfere with that! How can I? That is your destiny!” Similarly, the army refused to give me shelter because they had not received any orders to protect civilians. They explained that this helplessness had forced them earlier to hand over two Sikhs to a mob carrying sticks and stones. The Sikh men had been

There is one hope that I still nurture— the realm of God

brutalized and killed as the fully armed men of the Indian Army looked on. The army men told me that I would face the same fate in a few hours as the day broke.

My persistent efforts and a lucky break with a very senior army officer, who visited the facility for a few minutes, eventually got me a temporary stay at the army base. From there, I was sent to a local gurdwara where other injured Sikhs were staying. Eventually I was able to return to my family, battered and bruised but alive, several days after I had hugged them the final goodbye.

More than a quarter century after what happened in the streets of India, the dead have found no justice. Thousands of widows and orphans are still dealing with an unending nightmare. Any witnesses that dare to come forward are still being intimidated. The politicians who organized the carnage have been rewarded with highly lucrative political positions. And a democratic nation of over one billion stays mute to the concept of justice.

In the Summer 2004 issue of *World Policy Journal*, *The New York Times* Delhi Bureau Chief, Barbara Crossette, wrote:

Almost as many Sikhs died in a few days in India in 1984 than all the deaths and disappearances in Chile during the seventeen-year military rule of Gen. Augusto Pinochet between 1973 and 1990 Not only Chile, but also Argentina, Peru, Mexico, South Africa, and Ethiopia, among other nations, have been addressing atrocities from decades past. India, in refusing to confront its bloody recent history, stands in glaring contrast to these nations.

My own experience and what I often see in the world leaves me wondering about what is happening to the world, and about the human nature itself. How can one kill a child, put a garland of fire around someone's neck, savagely gang-rape someone's daughter, and then go home and lovingly hug one's own daughter or son and give the unconditional love of a father?

Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur and many other places have experienced genocides just in the past few years. Justifications and pretexts for genocides vary, but much of it happens in the name of religion or religion-related divisions, although religion teaches us compassion and love, Love of God and of God's sons and daughters.

Can such violence be prevented? Internal political dynamics and international political constraints make any meaningful solution practically impossible. It takes heated discussions over months, and often years, to come to even simple agreements. What happened in Rwanda and Darfur reflect the political world's inability in preventing such massacres or even in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

There is one hope that I still nurture—the realm of God. The realm of 'Fellowship in Prayer.' If religious and spiritual leaders of the world make a joint, collaborative effort, we can achieve miracles that can transform our society. For example, such is

happening across the world under the leadership of Religions for Peace.

Religious leaders wield more influence over the minds of their followers than any politician or any government can ever dream of. Their reach goes beyond that of the presidents and the prime ministers of the world, or of its tyrants. It goes even beyond the national boundaries. Even if the pressures of internal dynamics or of international sanctions and foreign armies do not move a regime, most men and women still hold the fear of God deep in their heart.

The spiritual leaders of the world need to unequivocally, and in one voice, impress upon their individual constituencies that God does not look kindly to brutality, even if it is ostensibly committed in the name of God. In particular, when proponents of a faith start perpetrating such atrocities, the leaders of that faith must speak forcefully and urgently against it, so as to stop further bloodshed and avoid the vicious cycle of ever increasing reciprocal violence. Leaders of other faiths must join the cause and lend their voice to it.

Admittedly, this is a simplistic hope. Even if such a joint and concerted interreligious effort can be forged, it may not bear fruit overnight. The world of hatred, intolerance and cruelty has deep memetic roots that have been developing over centuries, and that can be tackled only if committed leaders can reach the souls of their followers and nurture love and compassion in place of hatred and cruelty.

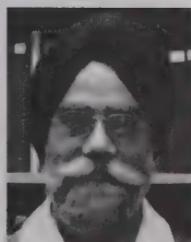
My hopes burn brighter than the garlands of fire around men's necks. As long as we have amongst us the courage and fortitude of Immaculee Ilibagizas, Eli Wiesels and Harvinder Singh Phoolkas, and as long as the leaders of our faiths can flood the conscious of the world with God's love and compassion, we can triumph over some of the most difficult challenges that we face today.

If we remember the oneness of all humanity, and seek

blessings for the well being of all humans, the world can become a better place to live for us all. We can achieve true universal harmony.

As I did on that dark night in a secluded corner of a train, I would like to end with the last line from the daily Sikh prayer that transformed ultimate horror into inexpressible serenity for me:

“O Nanak! In Thy Will, May ALL Prosper!” **SJ**



Dr. Satpal Singh is Chairperson of the World Sikh Council-America Region and the Chair of its Interfaith Committee. He frequently speaks on Sikh philosophy and the Sikh way of life in various forums and participates in interfaith dialogues on diversity, religion and peace. He is a professor at the University at Buffalo, NY.

reminders

ABRAHAM A. SCHECHTER

Divine things are not named by our intellect as they really are in themselves, for in that way it knows them not, but they are named in a way that is borrowed from created things.

-St. Thomas Aquinas

Looking up from my journal this evening, notably cooler air caused me to narrow my desk window's opening. Not to be mistaken, this brisk air is welcome. Through summer's writing, my journal has been propped open with a small rock which I'd pulled up while swimming in the lakes region here in Maine. The small fragment from a lake floor had been rounded and formed by its waters, and it's been my handy paperweight. Now, the rock has become a reminder of freshwater swimming on a hot summer day. Scooped up by my hands from beneath the surface, I held the little rock in my palm, facing up to July sun. Finding its textures and shape appealing, it wound up in my backpack, and then upon my desk.

In varied ways, reminders come to us. They may be gifts transferred to us, discoveries of our own, and even reminders we deliberately seek out through our travels. Objects, sounds, sights—even tastes—potentially call to mind paths taken. Reminders point to past events, as well as ahead to needed strength in order to persevere. I think of my father when using his typewriters and when calling upon my better common sense. Cooking favorite foods brings memories of my grandmother back to me. A life of always having music in my midst, there are lyrics, songs, and symphonies to remind me of where I've lived, worked, and travelled. An employer once complimented what he called my "go-for-it attitude," and I try remembering these sorts of words during quagmired times. Then there are the many negative reminders which require formidable discipline to sort out and deposit in their proper places. The full spectrum

reminds me of my journeys past and those I might anticipate. Time and circumstance help determine which reminders remain. The small rock that serves as a paperweight may not be kept for long, but the source stays with me. Recently, during a day of bicycling across an island, setting the bike down, and with my back against the terrain I had a strong impression of resting atop a mountain whose base lay anchored at the bottom of the ocean. It was a sense of being supported. To be prompted to recollect is to be invited to certitude. Knowledge and remembrance are parallel threads.

Reminders may come to us as inherited discoveries. Through time, we become recipients of the gifts of those around us. Their recollections can become ours, too. We all receive

Reminders may come as discoveries.

keepsakes in varying forms, and that surely includes stories. In this way, we are also discovering gems that land in our paths. Although significance may have been ascribed by predecessors, we can add our own appreciation. In sharing reminders, we can assure one another of the great purpose to our steps. Reminders may also manifest through our unique definition. I think of these as the reference points that we establish ourselves. By observing our own experiences, significant images emerge. As we accumulate sources and repertoires, these are accompanied by reminders sought. This is to say, they've not yet occurred, but they will because we understand the search. In other words, we are reminded to discover. The term *point de repère* speaks to the idea that a "point of reference" is equally a "point of departure," or a "benchmark" *niveau de repère*. Times of retreat fit into this category, and for me it has been sanctified time away from routines—often in places conducive to contemplation and community life. Another, more ordinary activity is writing in coffeehouses; my favorite venues each have their own histories.

Places can remind as forcefully as artifacts can.

Our finest reminders are those which re-strengthen. During a visit with my mother, a few years ago, she surprised me with a gift of an item I never knew she owned. Accompanying this extraordinary yet humble artifact was the associated story of how the family that rescued my mother from the worst of the Holocaust gave her a specially blessed silver medal from the church in Sablé Normandy. My mother had carefully kept it since the early 1940s, through decades and crossing the Atlantic, finally deciding to pass the medal along to me. I had never seen this before. The tiny silver etched medal is my most prized possession in the world. Indeed, the brave and generous family



chose it well: it is the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Of course. That makes sense now. If this small sacred icon could talk! It is with me, and so are the stories, names, places, and my mother's gesture that brought this reminder to my life.

As well as points of reference, reminders are compass

points. Direction connects destinations with origins. Past and horizons are called to consciousness. Reminded of what to seek, we are also reminded of what to avoid. In doing the latter, we develop ways to find the buoys and markers that indicate treacherous shoals. Further, with time, collections of recollections grow into a many-storied experience, a reference source in itself. At the same time, along the same voyage, reminders must not encumber. Unburdening is integral to the process of collecting. Through the vastness of our landscapes, with open spaces, one can carry only so much on their person.

While considering some of the ways by which life's gleanings are called to mind, there must be purpose in their faithful preservation. Surely, there remain lights to be found in darkness. Countless gems are as yet unsifted. Reminders are found in recollections received and discovered—and even in written words we read. With our kindreds, we are able to remind one another of what we recognize among us. The reminders of our loved ones become points of reference for us, too. I've begun to perceive my travels as being both fresh experiences and reminders at the same time. Though daunting in these times, we must daringly remind one another of the future. What is yet to be needn't resemble what is now or what has been left in the past.

Be reminded. 



Abraham A. Schechter began writing about his journeys in 1994, during his first sojourn at the Weston Priory. His illustrated blog of essays, *La Vie Graphite*, <http://laviegraphite.blogspot.com>, has a worldwide readership, and draws from his continuing life experiences—including his careers in photography, calligraphy, bookbinding, teaching, archival work, and more than a decade of participation as a musician in the Taizé monastery's ongoing Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth.

You

DAVID SERMERSHEIM

you

whom I do
not see but
hear more clearly
seem closer now

you

who chose me
and know the
one I am
surround me now

I reach for
your presence in
amber glow of dusk

hovering where I
sense your essence
grow within me now

For over thirty years David Sermersheim taught music and was Chairman of the Music Department at Hotchkiss School. His poems have appeared in numerous periodicals.



FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO RESPOND TO OUR SURVEY. CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE OR
FILL IN THE BLANKS. RETURN IN THE ENCLOSED, POSTAGE-PAID ENVELOPE. THANK YOU!

1. Age: 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69
70-79 80-89 90+

2. Education: High School Technical School Associate
Bachelor Master Doctorate/Professional

3. I am/was ordained clergy, vowed religious, or spiritual leader: Yes No

4. Faith tradition I currently practice:

5. What features do you value most in SACRED JOURNEY?

Message from President	FIP Interviews		
Personal Stories	Illuminations	Prayers	Poetry
Spiritual Practice	Book Reviews	Reflections	Endpiece

6 What topics would you like to see addressed in SACRED JOURNEY?

7. I would prefer to receive SACRED JOURNEY through:

Mail Email Both

8. I visit the Fellowship In Prayer website:

Regularly Sometimes Not at all

9. I use Call on Faith, the all-video smartphone app:

Regularly Sometimes Not at all

10. I participate in these aspects of FIP's Online Community:

Prayer Circles:	Regularly	Sometimes	Not at all
One-In-Prayer:	Regularly	Sometimes	Not at all
Step In & Step Up:	Regularly	Sometimes	Not at all
Events Calendar:	Regularly	Sometimes	Not at all

11. Would you follow FIP on Facebook? Yes No

12. Would you follow FIP on Twitter? Yes No

13. I send submissions to SACRED JOURNEY:

Regularly Sometimes Not at all

14. I have attended at least one FIP sponsored conference, lunch or other event: Yes No

15. I recommend SACRED JOURNEY and FIP sponsored events to my family, friends and colleagues: Yes No

16. How can we better acquaint the public with SACRED JOURNEY?

17. Please comment about our organization, journal, website, programs, communications, etc.

Optional:

Name

Email

Embracing Mystery

ANN LININGTON

Lord, grant me the maturity to embrace mystery
The faith to receive the irreconcilable
The strength to live with paradox
The wisdom to walk with unknowing
To be fully human
To relinquish the ego that needs to know,
To understand, that seeks to be a god.
Help me to walk in the ways of your kingdom
Where earthly values are inverted ~
The poor become rich, the meek inherit
The humble are raised up, and death equals life
So empower me by your Spirit
To live the way of the cross.

Anne Linington lives off the south coast of England on the beautiful Isle of Wight. It is where her poetry mentor Alfred Lord Tennyson had his home at Farringford House. While working at a Special Needs School her interest in poetry was re-kindled. Her own upbringing in Devon often inspires her to write on Creation and she will sometimes place her work alongside her photography.

The Opening

Dancing Tai Ji

PATRICIA V. ROBERTS

One thousand lotus petals bloom
above the muddy pond
even before fire and water have cleansed,
wood, wind or metal have balanced.

The promise of the golden flower
is present early in the morning.

Life surges
from the grounded root to the exploding crown,
through the empty, hollow stem
of the Tai Ji dancer.

I raise my arms,
become bigger than myself,
join the circle beyond
which contains us all.

My ordinary bowl
is now a sacred vessel
for the breath of God.

Patricia Roberts is a poet, spiritual director and Tai Ji Quan teacher. She is a native of Arequipa, Peru. For over forty years she has lived in the US and Spain but recently returned to her hometown where she welcomes groups for spiritual tourism in the Highlands of Peru.

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Prayer for a Second Childhood

BETTY SPENCE

Lest I become
too set in my way,
give me, Father,
the spirit of a child
at play.

Teach me again
to walk, to run,
to jump off
the porch of hope
into the arms of faith.

Let me know again
the joy of following
from strength to strength:
waiting, walking,
running, eagle-mounting.

Even as You blessed
the little children
long ago,
bless now the child in me.

Betty Spence writes from Mobile, AL. She is a widely published poet and frequent poetry award winner. She is a retired newspaper correspondent and columnist for the *Mobile Press Register*. When she is not writing poetry, she writes devotions for three different devotional markets. Visit her at bettyspence.blogspot.com

The Man Who Stayed Behind

NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

Last fall I had the opportunity to spend time with a dear friend. She had recently returned from Sudan after working for the past three years at several different non-governmental organizations. The NGOs where she had worked provided much-needed humanitarian aid and resources to the Sudanese people. As we enjoyed the beautiful fall weather on that Sunday afternoon, I listened, riveted to stories of her time in that complicated and war-torn country.

By chance, that very same day, an op-ed article was published in The New York Times about a man with whom my friend had worked in Sudan. In the article I read about Ryan Boyette, an American aid worker living in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. After the NGO pulled its entire staff out of the area for safety concerns, Ryan chose to quit his position with the prominent aid organization and stay in the country, as he felt a strong conviction to continue to provide and speak for the Nubian people who were being slaughtered at the hands of the Sudanese Army.

The article both captivated me and broke my heart. However, it was not The New York Times article, but the personal stories which my friend carefully told that afternoon which truly amazed me. They were stories of Ryan's deep love for the Nubian people and his personal connection to that region.

He went to Sudan in 2003, led by his strong faith to respond to the oppression of the Sudanese people. In 2008 he met and fell in love with a Nubian woman named Jazira. Their relationship was unprecedented, but they were determined to be married. Ryan resolved to act honorably and meet the traditional requirements of Jazira's family and tribe in order to have her hand in marriage. This meant, among other things, paying a huge dowry of cattle and participating in tribal rituals so that he would truly be considered one of the Nubian people. It was a long four-year process, but they

were married in February 2011 in the local church of the community where Jazira was raised. About 6,000 people attended the wedding.

Ryan is a stunning example of how faith can be a source of positive change and powerful courage. His selfless work and commitment to the Nubian people has not gone unnoticed. Ryan's story has received increased attention in the past few months. As the violence against the Nubian people intensifies, he has been featured on NBC, CNN, and other news outlets. Last fall Ryan spoke before Congress, highlighting human rights violations in Sudan.

The following is the original article on Ryan that appeared in The New York Times on October 23, 2011.

Lisa Baumert, Editorial Intern
Princeton Theological Seminary

In the last few months, as you and I have been fretting about the economy or moaning about the weather, Ryan Boyette has been living in a mud-wall hut and dodging bombs in his underwear.

Some humanitarian catastrophes—Congo, Somalia, Sudan—linger because the killing unfolds without witnesses. So Ryan, a 30-year-old from Florida, has made the perilous decision to bear witness to atrocities in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, secretly staying behind when other foreigners were evacuated.

I met Ryan a few years ago in Sudan, and even then he was a compelling figure who spoke the local languages of Otoro and Sudanese Arabic. An evangelical Christian deeply motivated by his faith, Ryan moved to the Nuba Mountains in 2003 and worked for Samaritan's Purse, an aid group led by the Rev. Franklin Graham.

Early this year, Ryan married a local woman, Jazira, a health worker—and 6,000 joyous Nubans celebrated at the wedding, along with Ryan's parents, who flew in from Florida.

It was clear that war was brewing in the Nuba Mountains. The region had sided with South Sudan in the country's long civil war, but now South Sudan was separating while the Nuba Mountains would remain in the north. The people—mostly Muslim but with a large Christian minority—supported a local rebel army left over from the civil war.

In June, fighting erupted. The Sudanese government moved in to destroy the rebel army and depopulate areas that supported it. Aid organizations pulled out their workers. Ryan decided that he could not flee, so when Samaritan's Purse ordered him to evacuate, he resigned and stayed behind.

"A lot of people tried to convince me to leave," Ryan remembers. "But this is where my wife is from, this is where I've lived for eight years. It's hard to get on a plane and say, 'Bye, I hope to see you when this ends.'"

Ryan organized a network of fifteen people to gather information and take photos and videos, documenting atrocities. He used a solar-powered laptop and a satellite phone to transmit them to the West, typically to the Enough Project, a Washington-based anti-genocide organization. He also supplied eyewitness interviews that helped the Enough Project and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative find evidence of atrocities, including eight mass graves, on satellite images. And he helped journalists understand what was going on.

"He's irreplaceable," said Jonathan Hutson of the Enough Project. "There's no substitute for someone on the ground."

Ryan tried to keep his presence in the region a secret, at least from the Sudanese government, for fear that it might seek to eliminate a witness. Once, a bombing seemed to target his hut, but he heard the plane approaching and ran out in his skivvies and took cover; the bombs missed, and he was unhurt.

After the first few weeks, the killings on the ground abated. But the government has continued the bombings.

"It's terrifying when they bomb," Ryan told me. "You don't feel safe at any time of day or night."

The bombs typically miss and have killed fewer than 200 people, he says, but they prevent people from farming their fields. Several hundred thousand people have been driven from their homes in the surrounding state of South Kordofan, Ryan says, and a famine may be looming.

"It's not a good time to have kids," Ryan quoted Jazira as telling him. "If we have kids, they'll just starve."

Frustrated by the lack of attention for the Nubans' plight, Ryan decided to return to the United States this month and tell his story. He couldn't get a visa for Jazira in time—obtaining an American visa for a spouse is a long and complex process—so she is in a refugee camp for 15,000 Nubans in South Sudan, struggling to address health needs there. Meanwhile, in Washington, Ryan has testified before Congress and met with White House officials.

Soon, he'll go back, rejoining Jazira and sneaking back with her into the Nuba Mountains. It'll be more dangerous than ever now that he has gone public, but he is determined to give voice to the voiceless—and Nubans will do everything to protect him.

In a world where leaders often pretend not to notice mass atrocities, for fear that they might be called upon to do something, I find Ryan an inspiration. His eyewitness accounts make it more difficult for the world to neglect a humanitarian crisis in the Nuba Mountains—even if he does need to brush up on his tech skills.

I asked Ryan if he planned to use Twitter.

"Twitter?" he asked. "I've been in the bush for nine years, so I don't know how to use it." But he's planning to learn.



Nicholas Kristof is a journalist, author and columnist for *The New York Times*. He writes and lectures on US and international human rights abuses and social injustices. He is a two-time Pulitzer Prize Winner. Nicholas graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard College and then studied law at Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship. This article was an op-ed column in *The New York Times* © 2011 and used with permission.

Mitzvah

“Commandment” is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word *mitzvah*, but in Judaism *mitzvah* specifically refers the 613 commandments of the Torah that Jews are to observe. A modern and derivative meaning of *mitzvah* is a moral deed or act of kindness, performed as a religious duty. In this secondary sense, *mitzvahs* are completely selfless acts that draw us closer to God and ensure that society is healthy and just. *Mitzvah* as a selfless, moral deed transcends the Jewish religion, and is foundational to all religious beliefs and spiritual practices because without *mitzvahs*, faith and religion are void.

As a spiritual practice we invite you to read the *mitzvahs* below and encourage you to add your own. Consider how each speaks to you. Which are already part of your life? Which interest you? And which do you desire to fulfill? Choose one that seems appropriate for your life right now, and make an intention to do this particular *mitzvah*. Consider journaling about your experience.

The Honest Witness Mitzvah: When you must say something, taking care to truthfully report what was said or done.

The Sacred Space Mitzvah: Marking the rooms of your home as sacred space for loving and listening.

The Citizenship Mitzvah: Participating in society through your voice, taxes, service, and vote.

The Promise Mitzvah: Taking care to honorably fulfill commitments you have made.

The Comforting Mitzvah: Supporting those in mourning through simply being present.

The Selfless Mitzvah: Performing deeds of loving-kindness for others.

Holocaust Study Tour

In 1994, the State of New Jersey, at the urging of religious, civic and political leaders, mandated the study of the Holocaust. At New Milford High School, Holocaust education is approached through classroom instruction, field experiences and the study of the Holocaust at authentic learning sites in Europe.

A semester course entitled The Holocaust, Genocide and Human Behavior is available as an elective course for students in grades 11 and 12. Students involved in this course will learn about the warning signs of genocide and how this relates to the past and present.

An advanced high school seminar is afforded to interested students through an application process. Students who meet the criteria for acceptance will visit Berlin, Germany; Prague, Czech Republic; Olomouc-Trsice, Czech Republic; and Krakow, Poland.

The goal of this program is to foster an understanding of the Holocaust within the context of genocide and through this experience students will bring these lessons to the present day as they share their personal growth with their families, the community and the school community.

The Holocaust Study Tour is unlike classroom learning not only because students experience the history through firsthand encounters, but also because they learn that history is dynamic and that as time passes, we unearth more of the history. History is not just about the pages in a textbook. History is the story of real, living people. The history lessons learned on our 2011 tour continue to impact all of us who journeyed together.

Hoping

GREGORY WINKLER

I am beginning to realize more of what I want from my own life. I am beginning to realize how tired I am of being hidden from the world. I am beginning to resent the fear that I often have of myself and things I want to do. Lidice, Czech Republic gave me a new courage and a sense of spirituality that is totally unique for my life. I found Lidice to be the prettiest place that our group visited during the entire trip, but in contrast, I found that its famous memorial statue of some of the Holocaust's youngest victims showed the dark and evil side of Lidice's history. I saw Lidice as a wall of beauty that hid a dark truth; I found a new hope in myself in Lidice.

When I looked at the eighty-two faces of the children who make up the statue in Lidice, I felt as if they were asking me two questions: "Why?" and "What do you want?" These are two questions that I have asked myself for a long time. I thought about my "self" and these eighty-two children. Those children were murdered before they even had a chance of life, some of them too young to even know what life could be. So I looked into my heart and I thought about what I wanted my life to be. It was there and then that I promised myself that I would make something of my life—that I would live my life differently from that moment on and make it mean something. I would do this for the Lidice children who had their chances taken away without the opportunities to determine what their own lives would mean.

While I was staring into the faces of the statue, I suddenly heard the voice of a child. I looked around to see a family with their small son walking through the site. When I saw them I began to cry—not from sadness, however, but rather from joy. Here at this place after such evil, I was able to glimpse a sign of

hope in that young child who, like me, had his whole life before him. That hope and the site around me gave me the strongest urge to pray that I have had. I suddenly dropped to the ground. I prayed for the youth of the world and for the future of the world. I prayed for safety from the horrors of the world away from horrible times and into the hope of peace.

Forgiving

MICHELLE KHIMISHMAN

With the establishment of the Nazi Party, Jews were transformed from human beings into numbers. They were viewed as threats to a perfect race and it was believed that they needed to be destroyed completely. To carry out this goal, many concentration camps were set up all across Europe from 1933-1945. At Auschwitz, as a number, Jews became part of a system. From their first moments at the camp they had the numbers of the "system" inked onto their forearms. From that moment forward the victims no longer had identities; they were numerical figures and all part of a bigger system.

After our group arrived and toured Auschwitz, I found myself contemplating the purpose behind the tattoo. I understood that the Nazis used it to keep some sort of order among the Jews, but a number was also placed on each prisoner's jumpsuit. Why hadn't the jumpsuit been enough? I finally came to realize that the goal behind the tattoo, other than keeping order was to dehumanize the Jew and make him feel less than the person he was. I wondered if for the rest of their lives, would those survivors always look down at their forearms and remember the time they were told they were inferior to society. How would they ever get beyond it to establish a happy life in the days ahead of them?

I thought of Pavel Stransky, a Holocaust survivor we had met days before. Pavel had endured and survived Teresenstadt and Auschwitz-Birkenau. I was astonished that he told the painful story of his past with what seemed to be absolutely no anger in his voice—even with the constant reminder of the Holocaust tattooed on his very forearm. I was baffled by this man’s humility. I considered all the things that Pavel preached about life, and it suddenly all clicked. Pavel had found the strength to survive and to continue living through the great love he had once had for a young woman.

One day while on our trip, Pavel had asked each of us what we considered to be the key to life. At first I could not think of an answer. As that day went on, I continued to roll his question around in my head. I finally came up with a response: could the key to life be found in forgiveness? Without forgiveness, there is no contentedness in life. There is no going back into the past to accept what had already been done and move ahead. At one point in their lives, thousands of Holocaust survivors had been catalogued and organized as numbers and somehow many of them had found that forgiving needed to come from their hardships. Forgiveness is one of the most difficult things to reach, yet Pavel had found that forgiving led to a new life—a new life as an individual, not a number ever again.

Forgiving does not mean forgetting. Perhaps forgiving allows one to go on to teach what should never be forgotten.

Gregory Winkler and Michelle Khimishman are students of New Milford High School. They were on the 2011 Holocaust Study Tour. The New Milford High School, Jersey City Public Schools, St. Thomas Aquinas High School and Bishop O'Dowd High School recognize and appreciate the support of the Board of Education and the administration of each school. In addition, this program is not possible without the generous contributions from their donors.

The White Rose

DAVID ROMANELLI

It goes without saying that having stolen \$18 billion from investors, Bernie Madoff is the most infamous white collar criminal of our time. Living as a yogi in a very different world, I never thought I'd have any sort of contact or personal experience with The Madoffs. It just seemed like another world to me. And then—I went to a networking group in New York City. As it often goes with networking groups, everyone in the room gets 45 seconds to introduce themselves. There were lawyers, a dentist, a diet coach, an acupuncturist and the list goes on. A guy across from me stood up and said to the fifty plus people in attendance, "I'm Andrew Madoff" and went on to explain his business and the service provided. I stared at him in disbelief. The son of Bernie Madoff?

Andrew Madoff was recently the subject of a *60 Minutes* story in which he wholeheartedly denied knowing anything about his father's illegal activities. If that is true, then here's a guy unjustly incinerated in the fiery tail of a karmic meteor from hell. Not to say you should feel badly for him, but it's interesting to observe. Even just a few years ago, Andrew idolized his father, a mega-successful business man who is now considered among the dregs of the earth. In 2010 Andrew's brother, Mark, committed suicide. Until recently, Andrew was estranged from his once beloved mother. What could be worse for a once proud son than enduring his family's complete and public demise?

Very few people in the room, if anyone, spoke with Andrew. To me, it felt like it was 8th grade again and the unpopular kid was left to stew in his awkwardness. I know some of you must be thinking that he deserves this fate. But what if Andrew Madoff really didn't know about his father's wrongdoing? And what if he truly is an innocent and shattered

soul, struggling to find his way in life? Does he deserve this treatment?

We should all be very weary of what Nietzsche defined as "herd behavior" or "herd morality;" whereby he perceived humans as herd animals, lacking any individual will and living by group instincts. Of course one of the most famous and sad example of "herd behavior" was during World War II when millions and millions of innocent German citizens were herded into the Nazi party and accepted the belief that it was "the right thing" to kill Jews, Soviets, Gypsies and homosexuals in concentration camps. If you were an Aryan German citizen during World War II just living your life and trying to do the best for your family and you were told that ethnic cleansing was the official policy of your government at a time when soldiers were dying on two fronts there is a chance you, and I, like millions of "innocent" German citizens, might have simply accepted that this was necessary action. As Hermann Goering, founder of the German Gestapo said, "Voice or no

It is a lesson in dissent.
It is a tale of courage, of principle.

voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger." It works the same in any country, at any time.

There was in fact a group of three German students distributing leaflets during the time of the Nazis—Hans Scholl, his sister Sophie Scholl, and Christophe Probst. The leaflets were entitled "The White Rose" and contained an anonymous essay speaking out against the Nazi Party and inciting Germans to rise up and do the right thing. All three students were rounded up and executed. Their story has been the subject of various books and movies.

In some way in each of our lives, we could spend more time away from the herd and ask "how can we be the white rose?" Whether it's coming out in support of the dire needs of an overworked immigrant in your office building or standing up to the excessive demands of email and how it's eroding your quality of life or daring to befriend an embattled, and unpopular soul. Life is really short and the herd will carry you even faster toward the end of days. What better time than right now to turn around and walk in another direction, sing a different song, be the white rose in the muddy river. 



David Romanelli has been traveling the world sharing his unique experiences in yoga classes including, "Chocolate & Yoga" and "Wine & Yoga." He has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Oprah*, *Newsweek*, and *Food & Wine* magazines. David lives by his mantra, "A beautiful, funny and delicious moment each day keeps the stress away." He is the author of *Yeah Dave's Guide to Livin' the Moment: Getting to Ecstasy through Wine, Chocolate, and your iPod Playlist*. www.beautifulfunnydelicious.com

Being Unrecognized

NADIA RIAZATI

Though I studied hard for the entrance exams, I knew that I would not be able to attend university in Iran. I am a member of the Bahá'í faith, an unrecognized religious minority in a country where all university applicants are required to identify their religion from among only four choices: Muslim, Christian, Jew, or Zoroastrian. Applicants who do not check one of these four boxes on the application form are not allowed to sit for university entrance exams, regardless of how qualified they might be. As a Bahá'í, I do not, as a matter of principle, misrepresent my religious affiliation and since there was no box on the form for my religion, I checked none. Thus, I was not permitted to sit for the entrance exam.

This was not new or unexpected. While in high school I was the country's top-ranked student in math and religious studies but I was excluded from attending international competitions in these fields because I was Bahá'í. Instead of being allowed to represent my school in a prestigious academic summit I was accused of being a hypocrite because I was Bahá'í but had studied the Quran, the holy book of Islam. So, being denied access to the university entrance exams was simply the culmination of many years of academic discrimination based on my religion. And yet, my experience only begins to scratch the surface of the persecution suffered by Bahá'ís in Iran.

Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith, was a nineteenth-century Persian nobleman who taught that all the religions of the world are part of one divine, unfolding faith of God—of which the Bahá'í faith is the most recent of these independent world religions. Bahá'í teachings emphasize the unity of humanity; the elimination of all prejudices, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, creed, or class; the

equality of women and men; the harmony of science and religion; universal education; and the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty. Bahá'ís are non-violent and peaceful and they strive to be law-abiding, loyal citizens wherever they live. It is the second most wide-spread religion in the world, and Bahá'ís in many countries are able to freely practice their faith; the exception being Iran—the birthplace of the religion—where its followers are systematically oppressed by the Iranian government.

Since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century the Bahá'í community in Iran has faced waves of persecution. In the early years over 20,000 followers were killed for their faith. Throughout the twentieth-century the community faced less severe institutionalized discrimination as well as fewer

Living a Bahá'í life is
loving and serving all humanity
without expectation.

periodic acts of violence. However, since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Bahá'ís—who are the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran—have become a special target of the regime. While the national constitution recognizes Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as legitimate religions, it does not confer legitimacy on the Bahá'í faith, a post-Islamic religion. The Iranian government has sought to portray Bahá'ís as heretics and apostates, as well as subversive political elements, characterizing them as foreign spies and scapegoating them for the country's current political and economic problems.

Numerous independent human rights groups report that over 200 Bahá'ís have been killed since the Islamic Revolution, with many more imprisoned and tortured. Several Bahá'í holy sites have been destroyed, cemeteries desecrated, homes burned, marriages unrecognized and school children harassed. Bahá'ís are banned from universities, are not permitted to hold

government jobs, are denied business licenses and Muslim business owners are pressured not to employ them. Within the last few years, the government has arrested the seven-member ad-hoc leadership group of the Bahá'ís in Iran and sentenced them to twenty years in prison.

Despite severe oppression the Bahá'í community has attempted to thrive. After numerous failed petitions to allow Bahá'ís to attend university, in 1987 the community started its own informal, creative and peaceful response to the systematic denial of higher education; the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education, BIHE. Meeting in people's homes, using volunteer faculty and donated supplies, BIHE has provided rigorous courses of academic study in a variety of fields for over twenty years. By providing higher education to young Bahá'ís, BIHE has attempted to save the intellectual and cultural heritage of the community.

After being denied the opportunity to attend a state university in Iran, I attended BIHE where I pursued religious studies, pharmacology, psychology and sociology. Classes were held at our homes, and we knew that at any time we could be subjected to government raids. In order to protect students and faculty, and keep our lab equipment, computers, textbooks and other academic materials from being confiscated, we did not talk about the location of our classes. Following many years of hard work, I earned both my undergraduate and graduate degrees from BIHE, though my credentials were, of course, not recognized in Iran. Despite our commitment and perseverance, my classmates and I could not obtain jobs upon graduation.

But our efforts were not made simply with the goal of employment. Through our involvement with BIHE, we proved that we would not remain silent and idle in the face of persecution but instead strove to make something of ourselves. More importantly we honored our fundamental beliefs as Bahá'ís. Education is very important in our faith, and living a Bahá'í life means loving all humanity and serving

others without the expectation of receiving anything in return. Through BIHE, we were able to educate ourselves so we could do this. The Bahá'ís of Iran love their country and see for it a glorious future. They want nothing more than to work side by side with their fellow citizens to build that future. BIHE fosters in young Bahá'ís the full development of their talents, so when the time comes to participate, they will be ready.

Part of this process of making ourselves ready and able to serve often involves pursuing post-graduate studies abroad. While BIHE credentials are not accepted in Iran, there are a growing number of universities outside of Iran that are willing to recognize BIHE degrees. For example, I am currently in the United States, working toward my PhD in the sociology of globalization, politics, religion, and minorities in the Middle East and North Africa.

Now, living in America, I am grateful to have the right to educate myself, to work and to freely practice my religion. I know my fellow Bahá'ís in Iran do not have these same rights and they live under the constant threat of violence. I fear for their safety, especially those involved with BIHE. After crackdowns in 1998, 2001 and 2002, the government once again conducted sweeping raids in 2011 and declared BIHE to be illegal, sentencing seven educators associated with BIHE to four or five years in prison.

I know the seven educators imprisoned in Iran are living in dire conditions. Yet I also know that, like all the Bahá'ís in Iran, they will bear this injustice with grace and resilience. Over years of persecution Bahá'ís have consistently been offered their lives, their freedom and their property if they will recant their Bahá'í beliefs and convert to Islam. They have refused to do so. While consistently affirming their faith, Bahá'ís have remained non-violent and obedient to the government and have sought to better themselves and serve their fellow citizens and their country.

When I look back on my life in Iran, I realize the experience

of persecution for my faith is like the pain experienced by a seed as it grows into a fruitful tree. Despite severe storms and harsh winds, the seed will not only survive, but will thrive, fulfilling its potential and bearing fruit. Although the seed is lost in the tree, the tree is much greater and its beautiful fruits will scatter many more seeds, each one endowed with the potential for a new tree. For me, as a Bahá'í, this is the true meaning of sacrifice. In true sacrifice, nothing is lost. Instead something priceless is gained. It is my hope that the Bahá'ís of Iran will one day reap the fruits of their sacrifice and their rights will be respected. They will be given equal opportunities to work, attend school, get married, raise their children, worship in peace and thereby they will have the freedom to serve their fellow human beings. **SJ**



Nadia Riazati was born and raised in Iran. She is currently a doctoral student in Miami, FL, and works as a psychologist. She has presented and published regarding the situation of the Bahá'ís in Iran, and has been interviewed for Persian language media outlets, such as *Noveen TV* and *Payam-i-Doost*.

The Swastika in Our Neighborhood

BARBARA BECKER

Across the nation, anti-Semitic bias cases have been capturing news headlines. Recently, two men from Farmington, New Mexico were sentenced to time in federal prison for branding a swastika on the arm of a Navajo man who suffers from mental disabilities. Swastikas were found graffitied on storefronts and homes across the New York metropolitan area, and a teenager has been charged with throwing Molotov cocktails at a synagogue in New Jersey, igniting a fire in the residence of the rabbi and his family.

The recent rash of anti-Semitic incidents prompted many leaders to talk about the need to "speak up and condemn these vulgar crimes and respond forcefully." But how do you respond to bias when you're with your young child, and the crime is in your own neighborhood?

I was recently faced with this question while walking with my eight-year-old son down a street near our home in downtown Manhattan. He was the first to spot it—a purple swastika scrawled across the forehead of a man on a billboard advertising a cruise line. "Isn't that a swastika?" he demanded, pointing. "Yes, it definitely is," I answered. "Where have you seen one before?" "*Raiders of the Lost Ark*," he said, staring up at the graffiti. I was quickly taking in the complexities of the situation and what to say next when he said sadly, "The person who did that hates me, and he doesn't even know me."

You don't have to be raising a Jewish child to understand the heartbreak in those words. As I took his hand and we continued on our way home, I told him a somewhat disjointed story about my own understanding of the swastika and what it stands for.



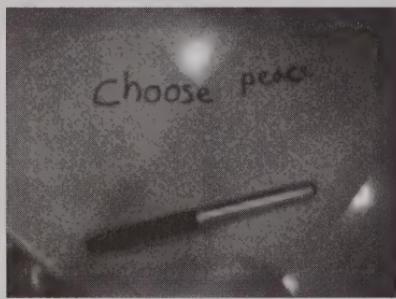
I told him about how confused I felt when I first saw an ancient swastika carved on a temple in Thailand in my post-college backpacking days. And how the symbol, which originally had a positive, sacred meaning in Hindu, Buddhist and other traditions, was turned on its side (literally) by the Nazis and became a mark of Aryan supremacy.

This led to a discussion of Hitler's view of a master race, which is pretty tough to explain to a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jewish child (a friend fondly refers to him as "the Jewish Viking"). I was careful not to alarm him, but I wanted to be accurate and honest.

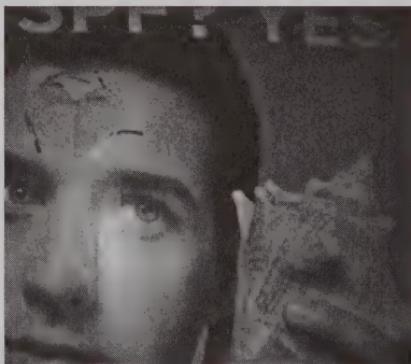
I am admittedly not an historian nor an expert on current day hate symbols, but we seldom wear our professional hats when talking to our children anyhow. I became aware that he needed to have a sense of control over what he had just seen. My telling him I was going to report it by calling the City's 311 Hotline wasn't going to be enough.

"So what do you want to do about the swastika?" I asked. "Let's get a can of black spray paint and cover it over," he suggested. "That might feel good," I said. "But wouldn't we be destroying something that doesn't belong to us?" "We could put something good over it," he said thoughtfully.

I couldn't imagine what that could be, but listened anyhow. Sometimes a child's internal compass points them to their own true north, and it's best for us adults to get out of their way. Armed with colored paper and markers, he came up with this . . .



Which I lifted him up to tape on the billboard the following day . . .



Clearly this is just a beginning. Anti-Semitic acts will not vanish overnight, and our conversations and responses will evolve with each passing day. But the important thing is to keep talking and to always, always respond. *SJ*



Barbara Becker is the founder of EqualShot, a strategic communications and planning firm, and a faculty member at Columbia University's master's program in strategic communications. She has worked with non-profit organizations and foundations in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America on human rights, education, environment, and women's empowerment. Barbara and her husband live with their sons on New York City's Lower East Side.

Angel with a Broken Wing

PATRICK FRANK

wild wind tipped our angel
one wing gone, but not gone
lying beside her

we save them both
the wing and the angel
she still protects us

I feel it even stronger, her protection
because she is broken, because we now
share with her our pain and sorrow

and an indomitable spirit

Patrick Frank is a poet-essayist and song writer with a background in teaching and counseling. Over the years, his writing has been published in over sixty periodicals and anthologized four times. Patrick leans towards the theory and practice of Taoism yet considers himself interfaith. He is an advocate for the poor in the western region of North Carolina. <http://open.salon.com/blog/patrickgfrank>

Every Day: Soaring

VICTORIA WOODS-YEE

Fluff of
White
Dandelion
Seeds

Floating,
Landing on
Black
Asphalt road.

Bright
Yellow
Gone
Away,

Lessening
Its load
To soar,
Leaving

Color
Behind;
Claiming
Freedom.



Victoria Woods-Yee enjoys nature, art, music, herbal studies and has a passion for peace and social justice issues. She attends the First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio, where her view of spirituality and the Creator are evolving.

Graphic: © istockphoto.com/khalus

Hillside

NANCY COMPTON WILLIAMS

Beneath the moss,
stones have forgotten
their edginess,
their certainty,
softened in their descent
through time.

Moment of Awakening

NANCY COMPTON WILLIAMS

At a quarter
till sunrise,
they start to sing.
Awakened
from the embrace
of night,
they sublime
into day,
caroling radiance.

Nancy Compton Williams has had over two-hundred fifty poems published nationally and internationally. Since retiring from teaching she spends all her time reading and writing poetry. She has served on the editorial board of *Poem*, which is sponsored by the Literary Association in Alabama where she resides.

Gentlemen's Genocide and Jesus

JOHN CRAIG

The year is 1847. The place is Ireland, and four thousand ships are carrying peas, beans, rabbits, salmon, honey and potatoes from Ireland to English ports. Ten thousand head of cattle and four thousand horses and ponies are being sent to England and approximately one million gallons of butter and 1.7 million gallons of grain-derived alcohol as well. It would seem that Ireland in 1847 is a very prosperous place, having produced so much food and livestock for export to England. However, this assumption is only partially true. In 1847, something else was going on in Ireland, four hundred thousand Irish people were dying of starvation.

It was the third year of what is commonly called the Irish Potato Famine. But to the Irish people, it is known as *An Gorta Mor*, The Great Hunger. It began in August 1845 when blight hit the potato crop, the

staple of a people who were primarily poor tenant farmers. By 1847, there was nothing left to plant. Farmers were evicted from their lands and the dying accelerated. The abundance of food and livestock described above did not belong to the farmers, but to the landlords. In all, one million Irish people died of starvation, and another two million emigrated to avoid it, most coming to America.

As people of faith, Christians are duty-bound to ask tough questions about *An Gorta Mor*. Why did England, ostensibly a Christian nation, plunder another nation's natural resources and produce, standing by and doing nothing while that nation's people died by the hundreds of thousands? Why were one million Irish people allowed to starve to death by what has been called "gentlemen's genocide"?

As people of faith living in the United States today,

American Christians are just as duty-bound to ask tough questions about events that have happened on American soil. Why did our country, also ostensibly a Christian nation, allow the evil of slavery? Why was the genocide of Native Americans and the plundering of their lands allowed to happen? Why are so many Americans homeless, hungry and in constant danger of being victims of gun violence?

For Christians, answering these questions is tough because they have to look deep within. The Gospel has to be taken seriously. When confronted by human misery, Jesus responded with compassion. Christians are called not just to see but to be Jesus to those in need, to heal the sick, feed the hungry and preach always the Good News. This is a condition of discipleship, rooted in baptism when Christians are anointed as Jesus himself was, to be priest, prophet and king; but for Jesus, as for every Christian, to reign is to serve. At the Eucharistic table Christians commit themselves

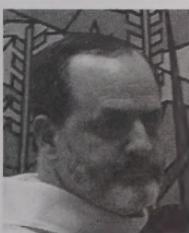
to living in solidarity, in communion with the poor and oppressed. This first requires repentance for sins against charity and justice and a conversion of heart and mind that embraces Gospel poverty, practicing emotional and spiritual detachment, relinquishing control to God and living more simply so others may simply live.

By actively seeking out opportunities to serve those who are the most distressed in our neighborhoods, our communities and around the world, Christians demonstrate they do take the Gospel of Jesus seriously. A Church that is so on fire for the Gospel and zealous in its love for the poor ensures that no one will ever again have to ask why Christians allow moral and social evils to be carried out in their name. No one will ever again have to ask why Christians stand by while hundreds of thousands of people are dying of starvation. Such a Church does not tell Jesus, as his first disciples once did, to send away the poor and hungry, to let those in

need fend for themselves. This Church will be able to await with great joy and expectation the moment when Jesus will say, "Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the

foundation of the world . . . Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

(Matthew 25:34,40) SJ



Deacon John Craig ministers at St. Joseph Church, Hillsborough, NJ, within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen. This article was excerpted from a recent homily he gave.

How to be Spiritual Amidst this Chaos?

STEWART BITKOFF

For many events in life, we cannot control harmful outcomes; when something painful or chaotic occurs, we must feel and honor the pain. Yet, experience teaches with a little hard work, we can limit fear and worry about potentials; all of us must learn to separate out what is a possibility, and learn to use the tools in our personal tool box to move past potentials and reach happier, more tranquil states.

In 1969, it was during a BBC interview that Mrs. Beryl Worth, when questioned about her positive personal adjustment to a recent potentially fatal diagnosis of cancer, answered in the following way:

I think it was St. Ignatius who was sweeping the corridor when his novices came and asked, 'If the world were going to come to an end in ten minutes, what would you do?' He replied, 'Go on sweeping the corridor. And that is just what I'm going to do.'

In every moment, life is ending and beginning; life is joy and pain, chaos and peace. With every moment, after we have experienced what we need to experience; we must remember to go on doing our work to "continue sweeping the corridor." SJ

Dr. Stewart Bitkoff is an avid student of Sufi mysticism. Specializing in therapeutic recreation, psychiatric rehabilitation and mental health treatment, he holds a doctorate in education and has served on the faculties of six colleges and universities.

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